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THE INTELLIGENCE WAR

THE CHALLENGE TO 'EUROMISSILES'

By ROBERT MOSS

SENIOR Nato observers are increasingly concerned that plans to deploy a new generation of medium-range Pershing-2 and Cruise missiles in Western Europe by the end of 1983 could be aborted by the opposition campaign now being spearheaded by leading figures in the Socialist International (SI).

Since last November, when the SI Congress in Madrid endorsed a programme for the mobilisation of public opinion in favour of disarmament that had been drawn up by Mr Kalevi Sorsa, the Finnish Socialist Democratic leader, Socialist opposition to the "Euromissiles" has steadily gathered strength.

In January, the Socialist parties of the so-called "Scandinavia" area—Scandinavia and the Low Countries—came out strongly against the deployment of the new missiles at a conference held in Amsterdam.

The moving spirits behind the Amsterdam meeting were Mr Joop den Uyl, the former Dutch Prime Minister, and Mr Karel van Miert, the Flemish Socialist leader.

Last weekend, at another Socialist get-together in Oslo that was attended by Norwegian and Danish government ministers, the campaign was taken a stage further.

But the decisive conference will take place in Paris on March 19-21. At this gathering of European Socialist parties, intense pressure will be brought to bear on the Italian Socialist and Social Democratic parties—the PSI and the PSDI—to reject the declared willingness of the Italian governing coalition (in which they are both members) to accept Euromissiles.

Concerted pressures

If the Italian parties bow to the concerted pressure that is now being brought to bear on them, the West German Government may find it politically impossible not to follow suit.

West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Schmidt has been unable to contain the steady drift to the left inside the ruling SPD. He has also stated that a condition for Bonn's willingness to have Euromissiles sited on West German soil would be the agreement of another continental European country to do likewise.

Italy is the only other country on the European continent that has been ready to accept the new weapons. If Italy backs off, there is a very real risk that the whole Nato strategy that underlies the planned deployment of the Pershing-2 and Cruise missiles will be overturned, leaving Russia—which has been accelerating its deployment of SS-20s with a permanent ascendancy in medium-range missiles.

The manoeuvres within the SI are not the only pressures to which Mr Schmidt is being subjected. In the wake of President Brezhnev's speech to the Soviet Communist party Congress on Feb. 23, Moscow is embarked on a major diplomatic and propaganda offensive to depict its own behaviour as reasonable and conciliatory and to push President Reagan into agreeing to a summit conference before Washington is prepared.

Mr Brezhnev has offered to freeze the present levels of Euro-strategic missiles on both sides which would amount to confirming the present Soviet superiority. Mr Schmidt was obliged to treat this cynical proposal with diplomatic respect because, in a speech delivered in Essen in April last year, in the course of the West German election campaign, he himself made a similar proposal, calling for a moratorium on the development of Euro-strategic weapons.

Election ploy

Informed sources in Bonn say that Mr Schmidt was obliged to make this proposal because the Soviet leadership had made it plain in private discussions with an SPD emissary that this would be necessary the quid pro quo for the invitation to Moscow that the West German Chancellor was then seeking for electoral purposes. The SPD emissary was Mr Zeldmann, an aide to the veteran Social Democrat parliamentary leader, Mr Herbert Wehner.

It is also clear that Mr Schmidt is no longer capable of controlling his own party. Out of the 22 district committees of the SPD, no fewer than 19 have now come out in opposition to the Euromissiles. On Feb. 7-8, the youth wing of the SPD held a joint get-together with the Soviet Communist party youth section, and not a single member of the SPD's national executive saw fit to protest.

Nor have the SPD's national leaders (including Mr Schmidt himself) issued any strong condemnation of the current wave of mass-protest demonstrations—particularly against nuclear power plants like the one at Bruckdorf in northern Germany—and organised squatting in unoccupied apartment blocks in Berlin, Nuremberg and other cities that has badly overstretched the resources of the police.

The current level of unrest has added to uneasiness about a new campaign of protest rallies that is being planned against missile sites in West Germany, following the publication of a detailed list of locations in Stern magazine.

The headquarters of the Pershing brigade east of Stuttgart is believed to be a particular target for planned demonstrations. The brigade is commanded by Maj-Gen. Dick Boyle, a highly respected American officer who was formerly the deputy commander of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Mr Egon Bahr, the former architect of West Germany's Ostpolitik, who recently stepped down from his job as the SPD's general secretary, is now playing a key role in the SI's disarmament programme.

It was significant that in the farewell article he wrote for the SPD paper Vorwärts on the occasion of resigning his party job, he saw fit not to discuss the condition of Germany's Social Democrats

but to attack the Reagan Administration, actually suggesting that if the Russians decided to behave the same way as the Americans, we would all be in trouble.

Nato security officials are convinced that Soviet Bloc secret services and the International Department of the Soviet Communist party are playing a decisive role in co-ordinating the campaign against the Euromissiles.

One veteran West European counterintelligence chief comments that "the Russians are pulling out all the stops to sabotage the Euromissile programme, not even worrying if they expose some of their most important agents of influence inside the Socialist International".

The same source reports that documents found in the possession of the former East German Air Force chief of staff, Gen Bernhard Zorn—who was arrested by the French security service, the DST, in Lille last August following a lead from the Belgian Surete—revealed the existence of an important network of agents of influence in Brussels controlled by the East German Ministry of State Security (MfS).

The names include those of Belgian Socialist leaders who have maintained a position of close support of Soviet peace initiatives since their party signed a formal co-operation treaty with the Soviet Communist party in 1972.

It is also noted that the Flemish Socialist leader, Mr Karel van Miert, was the subject of a lengthy article in the Belgian magazine, L'Eventail, last August that detailed his extensive Soviet Bloc connections.

Unfortunately, a number of leading West European Socialists appear to subscribe to the Soviet view that nuclear missiles are "fear-some weapons of war" in the hands of Western imperialism but are "a protective shield of peace" in the possession of Moscow.

This image of the strategic balance was expounded at length in an article published in the Moscow journal Voprosy Filosofii last October under the signature of Maj-Gen A. S. Milopidov, of the Lenin Military-Political Academy.

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